

Legal Notice

Partial Bond Release and Comprehensive Five-Year Bond Review for Highland Gold Properties (Hard Rock Mining Operating Permit No. 00140)

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has received a request for partial bond release from Highland Gold Properties (HGP). HGP is authorized to operate a placer mine near Fish Creek in the Highland Mountains under Operating Permit No. 00140. The site is on private land in Township 1 North, Range 7 West, Sections 27, 28, 33, 34, approximately 14 miles south from Butte, MT in Butte-Silver Bow County.

DEQ currently holds a reclamation bond in the amount of \$25,000. DEQ is proposing to release \$5,287 for completed reclamation tasks, which include removing unused equipment and debris from the permit area, resulting in a required bond of \$19,713.

In addition to the request for bond release, DEQ is conducting a comprehensive bond review for Operating Permit No. 00140. DEQ has determined that the current bonding level does not represent the present costs of compliance with the Metal Mine Reclamation Act, administrative rules adopted thereunder, and the operating permit. DEQ is proposing to increase the bond by \$5,651, increasing the required bond from \$19,713 to \$25,364. The bond increase is largely due to changes in fuel prices, equipment rates, and updated indirect costs such as mobilization, contingency, and administration.

The procedure for adjusting bonds as a result of a comprehensive bond review is set forth in Section 82-4-338(3), MCA. Pursuant to Section 82-4-338(5), Montana Code Annotated (MCA), DEQ may not release or decrease a reclamation bond until the public has been provided an opportunity for a hearing and a hearing has been held if requested. The company and the public will have until September 26, 2023, to comment on these proposed changes to the bond amount. DEQ will issue a final bond determination after the comment period has expired. The company, or any person with an interest that may be adversely affected by DEQ's final bond determination, may obtain a contested case hearing before the Board of Environmental Review. A written request for a hearing must be filed with DEQ within 30 days of the issuance of the final bond determination, stating the reason for the request.

Requests for copies of the bond calculation associated with the comprehensive bond review, and any related questions should be directed to Eric Dahlgren, Hard Rock Mining Section Supervisor, Mining Bureau, Department of Environmental Quality, PO Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901, by telephone at (406) 444-5245 or by e-mail at deqhardrock@mt.gov.